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## Faculty Profile: Rebecca Leavitt

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## FACULTY PROFILE

### Rebecca Leavitt

Professor Rebecca Leavitt, the Chair of the Social Work Department, has become something of an expert on dealing with the stress caused by heading a popular program of study. Currently, Social Work is enjoying new interest with approximately 260 majors and mushrooming job opportunities in both the public and private sectors.

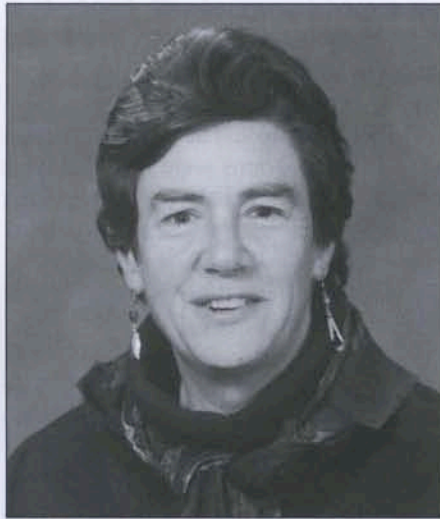
Part of the reason for the popularity of Social Work is that Bridgewater is one of two accredited Social Work programs in the state college system (the other is at Salem State). The larger reason for the popularity of Social Work is that Professor Leavitt and her faculty colleagues have a proven track record of preparing majors in this growing profession.

While the rush of students to Social Work is gratifying, the Social Work faculty has had to establish rigorous admission policies in order to maintain the integrity of the program. Professor Leavitt and the faculty are ever conscious of the quality and the commitment of the young men and women who chose social work, become licensed as beginning professional social workers and who carry the credentials of Bridgewater State College into the workplace.

To add further challenge to Professor Leavitt's professional life are the demands associated with next year's accreditation process conducted by the Council on Social Work Education. This semester, she and her faculty colleagues are putting together a large document that reflects new accreditation standards and restructures the social work curriculum. As part of this restructuring, Professor Leavitt has recommended the value of a community service compo-

nent in the social work curriculum. The faculty are also considering new ways of integrating research projects into the major which allows for a capstone course in the senior year building upon knowledge and competencies acquired in the junior year.

Despite the stress related to student demand and program evaluation, Professor Leavitt is optimistic about the prospects for social work majors. Career opportunities with the State Department of Social Services, hospital and nursing home facilities and adolescent and aging programs are increasingly available to those interested in



directing their work energies toward helping others.

Besides the heightened employment prospects in the field of social work, Professor Leavitt is also excited about the possibility of collaboration with Salem State College in which Bridgewater would serve as a site for a Master's degree in Social Work. Although this possibility is at least a few years away, Professor Leavitt realizes that with the growing population of alumni and other workers in southeastern Massachusetts, coupled with the increased demand for social workers, the Masters program is a critical need for the college and the region.

When Professor Leavitt is not involved with a myriad of administrative challenges, she devotes considerable attention to her teaching and is a regular instructor in the Women's Studies program. Her course, Psycho-Social Development of Women, ex-

amines psychological, social, political and economic factors affecting women's development, and is a popular offering in the program. Professor Leavitt hopes to use the course as a starting off point for a new edited book which will explore the internal and external forces that influence women's development.

Professor Leavitt's expertise in social work curriculum and social work accreditation have taken her to Beijing, China to address the Urban Institute, which was beginning its first social work program in that country. She has also been an Earthwatch volunteer in Zimbabwe where her group examined first-hand the maternal and child health needs of women in rural villages. At home, she has had the special opportunity to attend the HERS program at Bryn Mawr on Women in Leadership in Higher Education. She also is an active member of the National Association of Social Workers, serving on their executive committee, and as a presenter at workshops dealing with women's growth and women's support groups.

One of Professor Leavitt's more recent interests is in becoming certified in non-western healing practices. She is in the second year of a three year program of the Institute for Visualization Research which she began in the continuing education program at Smith College School of Social Work. This approach uses animal imagery and visualization as part of the healing process. Professor Leavitt believes that through meditation, clients can be taken on a journey that helps them discover new aspects of themselves. Professor Leavitt has used these techniques successfully with her own clients. After completing her three year training, Professor Leavitt intends to inform others about the benefits of this non-western approach to healing. She also has published on the therapeutic benefits of creative writing.

But as she readily admits, the challenges and opportunities associated with the Social Work program are her first concern. This is a time of great interest and excitement in Social Work at Bridgewater and Professor Leavitt is in the front lines working to ensure that the college meets the demands so that students can benefit from the opportunities.